



## **Bonlac Foods' co-operative future hangs in the balance**

Bonlac Foods' supplier members face the prospect of losing control of their co-operative, according to the Co-operative Federation of Victoria (CFV), the State's peak co-operative representative body.

CFV director and dairy farmer, Niel Black, said suppliers should look carefully at all offers to identify which ones gave them a continuing role as voting members within a co-operative structure.

"While the cash aspects of any offer are important in the short term, it is only long-term control that will guarantee members' welfare for future generations," Mr Black said.

"Joining with an Australian co-operative enterprise would be consistent with the mergers that have built Bonlac Foods during the past 100 years."

"Any other linkage that might risk loss of control and not give suppliers unrestricted voting rights could be the slippery slope to second-class dairy farming, where milk prices, are set by non-dairyfarmers," Mr Black said.

Mr Black pointed out that co-operatives are strongly represented in the top 20 dairy organisations in the world.

"In the dairy industry, it is the co-operatives that set the price. Let's keep it that way," he said.

"We in Victoria produce milk products at world competitive prices but, as price takers, we need co-operatives to protect our interests."

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The Co-operative Federation of Victoria is the peak body representing co-operatives in Victoria. Its activities support co-operative development, including member education, director training, and lobbying at State and Federal levels on issues affecting the co-operative sector.